

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 and 18-26 are rejected while Claims 16 and 17 are objected to. Applicants thank the Examiner for noting that Claims 16 and 17 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant respectfully requests that Claim 16 be canceled without prejudice. As such, Claims 1-15 and 17-26 are currently pending. Applicant respectfully requests further examination and reconsideration in view of the remarks set forth below. Applicant believes that any amendments herein to the patent application do not add new matter to it.

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejections

Claims 1-3, 5-7, 9-11, 14, 15, 18-21, and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being obvious over Easter et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,563,950 (hereinafter Easter), in view of Hashimoto et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,983,374 (hereinafter Hashimoto). Claims 8, 13, and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Easter in view of Hashimoto in further view of Fahrny, U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. 2004/0098591 (hereinafter Fahrny). Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Easter in view of Hashimoto in further view of Cmelik et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,031,992 (hereinafter Cmelik). Claims 23, 24, and 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being obvious over Easter in view of Hashimoto in further view of Moyer et al., U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. 2004/0243823 (hereinafter Moyer). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claims 10-20

Applicants have herein amended independent Claim 10 to substantially include the subject matter of objected to dependent Claim 16. As such, Applicants have herein canceled Claim 16 without prejudice. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent Claim 10 overcomes the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), and is thus in condition for allowance. Additionally, since Claims 11-15 and 17-20

depend from allowable amended independent Claim 10, Applicants respectfully submit that dependent Claims 11-15 and 17-20 overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), and are thus in condition for allowance for at least being dependent on an allowable base claim.

Claims 1-9

Applicants have herein amended independent Claim 1 to substantially include the subject matter of objected to Claim 16. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent Claim 1 is thus in condition for allowance. Furthermore, Applicants respectfully submit that dependent Claims 2-9 are thus in condition for allowance for at least being dependent on an allowable base claim.

Claims 21-26

Applicants have herein amended independent Claim 21 to substantially include the subject matter of objected to Claim 16. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent Claim 21 is thus in condition for allowance. In addition, Applicants respectfully submit that dependent Claims 22-26 are thus in condition for allowance for at least being dependent on an allowable base claim.

CONCLUSION

For all the reasons advanced above, Applicants respectfully submit that pending Claims 1-15 and 17-26 are in condition for allowance and that action is respectfully solicited.

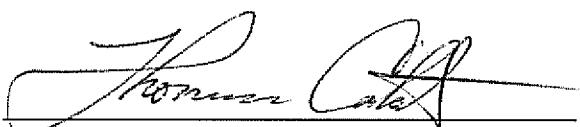
The Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative if the Examiner believes such action would expedite resolution of the present application.

Please charge any required fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account Number: 50-4160.

Respectfully submitted,

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